

## THE CAREER SCIENTIST PROGRAM

In his report to the Westchester Planning Conference on April 27, 1957, more than a year before the Health Research Council was formed, Dr. Walsh McDermott was speaking for his nine-man study panel on "Scientific Personnel; Recruitment and Training."

We asked ourselves, is there a need for more trained scientific personnel? We decided, yes, there is a need. . . . We recommend the creation of a number of high-level research positions in the medical institutions of the city. As a start, and by no means exclusively, we recommend that six such positions be set up . . . to conduct research and create an environment in which larger numbers of young people may evolve as scientific investigators. . . .

About a year later the Health Research Council was appointed by Mayor Wagner and Dr. McDermott was appointed its Chairman. The original six Career Scientist Awards were officially made on October 8, 1959 and have today expanded to 140, 91 of them made in the last two years and 44 within the last year. The city's investment in this form of health research has risen from \$85,000 to more than \$2,000,000 per year. Dr. McDermott, his panel, and the Council's Executive Committee, which later implemented the recommendations, can take pride in the success of this pioneering program.

Originally called "Investigatorships," these awards and the concept of creating with municipal funds stable positions for young scientists in research and teaching, had no precedent in science-underwriting procedure. Research Fellowships at the predoctoral and postdoctoral level were fairly plentiful, but only sporadic ways had been found to encourage the more mature investigator to continue a career in research rather than in private practice. The Health Research Council's program was the first concerted effort in which tax funds were directed toward this specific objective. In the words of Dr. Colin M. MacLeod, "Providing the means whereby dedicated young scientists may pursue a research career unhampered by financial worries, is one of the most important economic realities of our time."

Long-term support of these scientists, which ranges up to five years with the possibility of renewal, benefits the citizenry directly and indirectly. Since practically all 140 of the awardees hold teaching positions in the city's universities and medical institutions, it is obvious that the quality of our medical teaching is improved through the creativity and caliber of these scientists. Since the majority of them also hold staff

positions in municipal and voluntary hospitals it is equally obvious that the quality of medical care is improved, not only by reason of their own concentrated knowledge of the disease processes in which they are specializing but also because their prestige attracts the best quality of interns, residents and other health personnel.

Both of these are by-product dividends to the citizens who support the Council's research program with their tax dollars. The main objective—the virtual eradication of disease and the suffering which accompanies it—is never lost sight of; it may eventually be reached when medical science learns still more about the killing and crippling disorders of the human body and mind.

The Council's Career Scientist Awards were conceived primarily for the young but experienced scientist who has completed his fellowship training or has had equivalent experience. The average age is 39; median age is 38. Mature researchers, however, are not disqualified since excellence is the only criterion. In each case the Council's award is for the salary of the Career Scientist, but the university or other sponsoring institution is encouraged to supplement this. The award is not for project grant support for which the recipient may also apply to the Health Research Council; approximately one-fifth of the Career Scientists receive such supplementary support.

A profile of the Council's Career Scientist roster shows that nine are instructors, 65 are assistant professors, 51 are associate professors, 12 full professors, and one a director of Social Science Activities in the New York City Department of Health. Thirty-two came to New York from other cities, attracted largely by the opportunities that Council support provided. This latter fact fulfills the promise of Mayor Wagner when the Council was formed: "the constant refreshment and renewal of New York's already magnificent community of scientists."

On December 10, 1962, following the first scientific meeting of the Career Scientists, The Association of Career Scientists was formed and Dr. Saul J. Farber of New York University School of Medicine was appointed its chairman. The second scientific meeting of the Career Scientists, the first sponsored by the Association, took place on December 11, 1963. It is planned that there may be many additional meetings in the future when the exchange of information and the interplay of ideas will play a growing role in the improvement of the health of New York City.

George S. Mirick, *Scientific Director*